GUIDING MEDICAL STUDENTS

Since 2008 the E4C (Educators for CARE – Compassion, Advocacy, Responsibility, Empathy) program, under the direction of Dr. Lars Osterberg, has trained core faculty members to be teachers and mentors to Stanford medical students. All medical students are paired in small groups with individual faculty members, who are responsible for clinical skills education and professional development. Groups meet periodically throughout medical training to provide support and continuity.

The Rathmann Fellow, whose role is to focus on the promotion of patient-centered care in medical education, also participates in the E4C program. This year’s fellow Dr. Sam Lolak, Clinical Associate Professor in Psychiatry, is concentrating on methods to foster the development of mindfulness and compassion, qualities increasingly felt to be essential in medical practice but not systematically taught in medical school. He intends to assist the E4C faculty as they guide medical students toward incorporating mindfulness/compassion into their curriculum and future practice.

Mindfulness training is evidence-based: it has been associated with reduced burnout as well as improved patient care outcomes, and there has been a recent surge in interest nationally in incorporating this approach into physician training. Dr. Lolak’s eventual goals for this project are to measure personal and patient care outcomes associated with the training, and to find ways to expand training opportunities to our entire medical staff.

Recent Research:


For novice and veteran meditators who focused either on mindfulness or compassion, there were distinctly different performance results and brain scan neural pathways relating to cognition and emotional reactivity for each type of training. This study illustrates that different forms of meditation training have domain-specific effects rather than a central common mechanism, and may complement and enhance each other.

**If every fifth physician is affected by burnout, what about the other four? Resilience strategies of experienced physicians.** Zwack J, Schweitzer J. Acad Med. 2013 Jan 23. [Epub ahead of print] PMID: 23348093

From interviews with 200 diverse German physicians, resilience was associated with gratification from patient interactions, self-practices such as limitation of working hours, and attitudes such as focusing on the positive aspects of work.